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Hundreds pay tribute to slain co-worker Safety, security remain Corps' top priority

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KABUL – Flags fly at half-staff during a memorial service held in honor of James W. “Will” Coker Sept. 10 at the Afghanistan Engineer District-North Qalaa House Compound. Coker, a Navy employee temporarily on assignment with the Corps of Engineers, was killed while serving as a construction representative for the Corps of Engineers in Afghanistan.

KABUL – (Sept. 10) - Hundreds gathered from across Afghanistan Friday at Qalaa House Compound to pay tribute to a fellow Afghanistan Engineer District-North co-worker senselessly killed earlier this week while supporting U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reconstruction efforts here.

James W. “Will” Coker, 59, a construction representative site manager deployed in support of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Afghanistan Engineer District-North’s Operations and Maintenance Division was killed Sept. 5.



Mr. James W. "Will" Coker
21 August 1952 – 5 September 2011

The cause of his death is under investigation.

Coker, a Navy employee assigned to Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Mid-Atlantic as an Engineering Technician, was working on a temporary assignment with USACE at the time of his death. He is survived by his wife, three adult children, one stepdaughter and five grandchildren.

Leaders from across the Afghanistan Engineer District-North footprint were joined by Coker's family as the memorial service was broadcast across the district's footprint and to the Transatlantic Division, headquartered in Winchester, VA, via the Internet.

While the tragic circumstances of Coker's death sent a shockwave across the workforce here, Corps leadership reiterated employee safety and security remain its top priority.



KABUL – The Afghanistan Engineer District-North paid tribute to their fallen co-worker who was killed while helping the Corps of Engineers rebuild the war-torn country of Afghanistan. James W. "Will" Coker, 59, of Mount Pleasant, S.C., a Navy employee assigned to Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) Mid-Atlantic as an engineer technician, was deployed to Afghanistan working on a temporary assignment with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He is survived by his wife, three children and one step-child..

“This has been a turbulent and emotional week with the sudden loss of Will (Coker),” said Afghanistan Engineer District-North Commander Col. Christopher W. Martin, of the worker he led for a little more than two months. “I know many of you want answers, which will come with time, but for now, let us just focus on the memory of Will and the lives he touched when he was here.”

Coker, who was due to return home on R&R Sept. 15, inspired family and co-workers during his brief time here.

Martin expressed inspiration from the man who worked so briefly here, for how Coker “chose to live his life, as a family man, as an educator, as a working professional and as a brother in Christ to everyone,” he said. “He was a true servant whose actions in daily life labeled him as a true man of faith. The bible on his nightstand in his room was left open at Luke, Chapter 17:”

Verse 33: “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”

While scores of co-workers lined up around the compound to pay their respects to their fallen comrade,” the colonels closing remarks remained heavy on the minds of those in attendance, “May each of you find the courage and strength that Will had to remember that each day we have here is a gift, and to live as he did, like each day was his last.”